

The Usher.



In Ushering
Mend him who can't—The ladies call him sweet,
—LOVE'S LABOR'S LOSS.

I think Marie Prescott's information regarding the purchase of Oscar Wilde's play, printed a fortnight since in these columns, was premature. Meeting Mr. Wilde on Fifth avenue the other day the subject came up, and he said the MS. had not left his hands. I suppose the matter is still in abeyance. The negotiations, if carried out, would be a good thing for both parties. Vera, I understand, is an exceptionally clever play, and Miss Prescott is an exceptionally clever player. Such a combination of cleverness, if brought about, ought to succeed.

Yesterday a manager went to the District Messenger "call" in THE MIRROR office to summon a boy. Looking over the card of directions tacked beneath, he suddenly exclaimed: "Hello! this must refer to Rogers." The line calling forth the exclamation was this:

CAUTION! Do not touch the Crank while in motion. Copies of that card should be conspicuously posted in country editorial sanctums along My Sweetheart's route for the special guidance and instruction of the innocuous inmates.

No doubt our people are apt to make fools of themselves now and then over an English curiosity. But it is a democratic asininity. It takes in with equal gusto a sentimental elephant or an overrated professional beauty. The *furor* such importations create is not lasting. Under the glare of the heat and ferment it fades away as quickly as the photographer's proof when exposed to the rays of the sun. One hears a great deal about Langtry just now; but one doesn't hear much about Jumbo. Yet Jumbo was the more genuine and satisfactory curiosity of the two. The foolishness that made the monster elephant the craze, not long ago, makes the Jersey Lily the craze now. Such crazes are as fluctuating as fashion—which is fluctuating enough, Lord knows! While they last shrewd managers make money and credulous people spend it. The exchange is fair, and nobody except the grumbler who talks about "desecrating art" has a right to complain. He isn't heeded, however, for his voice—being very feeble—is drowned by the noise of the tom-toms outside the show and the shouts of the curious throng that crowds around and pays its money because the drums are beaten so loud.

When it comes down to solid ground—to the acceptance or rejection of foreign plays or actors that are sent out here to be judged upon their merits, the American public usually shows discrimination and sound judgment. The precedent of English reputation militates against rather than assists them here. Planquette's *Rip Van Winkle* was produced two months ago in London, and it is continuing still to a succession of crowded houses; it will probably run at the Comedy all Winter, for in the words of Charles Millward—whose chatty letter from the British Capital will be found elsewhere as corollary to Howard Paul's—"It is the best thing we have had in the shape of comic opera, and the music has a delightful sparkle throughout." New York seems to think differently, for it voted *Rip* a bore, and the management found it policy to shelve it after an inglorious duration of not quite four weeks. So it was here with *Manteaux Noirs*, the *Vicar of Bray*, *Mankind*, *Taken From Life*, *The Member From Slocum*, *The Parvenu* and a half-dozen more English successes which have proved American failures in spite of the sumptuous productions given them by our managers. Bearing these pieces in mind, it cannot truthfully be urged that our people are willing to bow down to and worship everything that the English have bowed down to and worshipped, without first exercising their common sense in an intelligent and unbiased investigation into the justice of its claim to recognition and support. The really meritorious British contributions to our amusement, such as Gilbert and Sullivan's charming operas, Byron's comedies and the better class of spectacular melodramas, win triumphs here incomparably greater than they secure in the land from which they are sent us. *Pinafore*, *The Pirates*, *Patience*, *The World, Youth and Lights* of London have enjoyed with us a popularity unequalled in the old country.

No one is quicker to acknowledge good in anything that contains it than the average citizen of these United States.

S. M. Hickey's clever comedians, Barry and Fay, will present Irish Aristocracy at the Academy Thanksgiving Day and evening. These performances will be the only ones given by this party here for some time, and the opportunity should not be lost of seeing what is pronounced in the principal provincial places one of the funniest plays acted by two of the funniest players of the age.

Success crowned the inaugural dinner of the Stuyvesant Club Sunday night. The *menu* was capital, the speeches few and brief and the members and guests, while buttoning up their ulsters to go into the snowy streets, after it was over, unanimously agreed they had never enjoyed themselves so much in their life. I do not believe a club has ever begun operations under more thoroughly gratifying circumstances. To begin with, there were no gaps at table—every man who had signified his intention of being present was there. The diners were skilfully seated so that the current of good-fellowship and harmony would flow unrestrainedly around and around the festive mahogany. There was a fine absence of inharmonious elements, and the room rang with laughter and merry talk all the evening. The thoroughly informal manner observed by everybody was exactly what the organizers of the Stuyvesant had hoped to see. The plan of gathering congenial men who neither affected "sassiness" nor "bohemian" rowdiness worked admirably, the mean line being distinctly and intuitively drawn by those present.

At President Aronson's right sat Joaquin Miller, the foremost American poetic genius, and at his left sat Blakeley Hall, one of the editors of the *Sun*. Next Miller was James L. Howard, Appraiser of the Port. (It is well he was not Appraiser of the Sherry, for in that case he would have exposed the only weak point of Restaurateur Neumiller's repast.) Between Mr. Howard and jolly Fred Lyster your humble servant was comfortably sandwiched. Further along was Barrett Van Auken, Commodore Garrison's grandson, and a very agreeable man. Joseph Haworth of the McCullough company, Frederick Paulding and Messrs. Bain, Keene, Deedy, King, Ford, Chase, Stine, McGuckin and Oscar Weil of the *Critic* were a few who I spied down at the other end of the long table laughing at Dr. Robertson's sallies of hot Scotch wit and returning Rolands for his Olivers. After coffee the President indulged in a few pleasant remarks to which Mr. Howard responded on behalf of the invited guests. A misapprehension of the purposes of the club caused this gentleman to switch off the right track for a few moments. That brought the doughty Highlander to his feet, in a few words very conclusively demonstrating that the Stuyvesant is not, as charged, an epicurean body. Then the speechifying was wisely choked off, and Joaquin Miller delivered in inimitable style his serio-comic poem about the betrothal, separation and final reunion of Mary Jane and William Brown. It was received with shouts of laughter. Next Paulding gave a dramatic recitation which displayed his dramatic force and elocutionary accomplishments excellently well. Following this came a comic song by Fred Lyster. Poor Brougham's "Rale Ould Irish Gentleman" never sounded funnier. Lyster wouldn't respond to an *encore*. He said his stock of ditties was limited—he would save the others for future occasions. Haworth recited "Shamus O'Brien" magnificently, and then after many good stories had been told and some recitations given, the club dispersed, highly elated with the hit made by their first dinner.

The complement of fifty members is nearly reached, forty-two names being now enrolled. The Executive Committee meets once a week to receive proposals for membership. Within a month the Stuyvesant will have a permanent habitation of its own wherein to receive its friends. This is just the sort of club for the right sort of actors, and I hope to see those already in the enjoyment of membership reinforced by others.

Randolph T. Purdy was not favored with seats for the first night of *Iolanthe*. The cause alleged was that brilliant (haired) critic's officiousness at the rehearsal Friday night when he went behind the scenes at the Standard. His conduct aroused the ire of D'Oyly Carte's representative, who insisted that the young man should be cut off the free-list by Manager Henderson. This was done accordingly, and Randolph had to get his ticket from a speculator.

While heartily concurring with the management's objection to Purdy and his alleged misconduct at the rehearsal, I do not think they took the proper action in the matter. A stout carpenter in force on the stage—that would have disposed could easily have suppressed the fresh young man if he insisted on violating the regulations of the matter for the moment. Then, instead of cutting off the *Star* from the critics' list, Miss Lenoir should have called down town and ex-

plained matters to its editor, stated the reason for refusing to admit Purdy, and arranged that a notice written by some other member of the staff, or no notice at all, should appear on Sunday morning. As it is, the manageress has administered a gross and unprovoked insult to the *Star* without provocation, when she only intended to subject its criticaster to the snubbing he evidently deserved. The snubbed, I observe, weakly retaliated by a par. in the *Man About Town* column in his paper, attacking Carte on the strength of the moderate salaries that gentleman's chorus receive. Very small potatoes that.

Starting for the Provinces.

Time—to A. M. Place—Forty-second Street Depot. *Dramatis Personæ*—A combination outward bound; baggage still undiminished; hope brightening each face.

The leading lady in a sealskin sacque, diamond ear-rings and terra-cotta gloves, satchel with monogram in silver, and a toque of velvet, with a bird of prey—"Siegeant," as the heralds call it. The heavy lady in black silk, with a derby hat, a cloak of plush, strong boots, and an alligator-skin gripsack. The walking lady in gray cloak, slim boots, gloves à la *Saville*, and close bonnet, with a travelling bag of black velvet. The soubrette in a Mother Hubbard cloak, a polo cap, a jacket with outside pockets, and a jaunty reticule of Russia leather with a snap to it. The old woman in faded black, with a bottle. The leading man in ulster, flat hat, dogskin gloves, and all complete, even to the monocular dangling by a film of silk, and looking hungrily at the soubrette's satchel, which he will offer to carry at the first stopping-place, thereby making himself solid with the fair owner. The juvenile man in Paget coat, with three buttons, a cane with a shepherd's crook to it, and yellow-topped boots, ogling the leading lady, who, absorbed in "maiden meditation fancy free," is thinking of the manager, and wastes no looks on smaller fry. The comedian, all in black, as becomes his lugubrious avocation, with fishy eye, stolidly staring at the heavy woman, whom he admires immensely on account of the severity of her demeanor and the weight of her voice. And the old man, in gray, reminiscent of Forrest, William Rufus Blake, Burton and Placide.

Lastly the star!!! in satin-lined coat, button-hole bouquet, gold-topped cane, dangling watch-ribbon with a gold seal, diamond pin, kid gloves and fifty-cent cigar. "The glass of fashion and the mould of form, the observed of all observers," he traverses the cars like a monarch and only deigns to cast a passing glance on the most favored of his train. To the walking lady he is "the god of her idolatry," and she will think of him by day and dream of him by night, all through the tour. Ah! if he would only carry her satchel how happy would she be; but that is too much to hope for. An approving smile, a nod, a gracious "How do?" is rapture enough for her. She has learned to adore in silence and to worship from afar off. Still, who knows what the chops and changes of a long season on the road, with lots of one-night stands, may bring forth, and stars of the first magnitude have descended from their spheres even to carry satchels before now. A falling star is no uncommon sight. Why should a condensing one be impossible?

Meanwhile, gentle Desdemona, study your part, and hope on, hope ever, a bell; a rumble, a rush, a scream, and the combination is off on the road—pray Heaven to prosper on its way, and to come back *en culture*, and not on their uppers.

Nilsson and Langtry.

The reader may mark it down as an accomplished fact that the "Jersey Lily," from a dramatic point of view, is a failure. No foreign artist ever landed on our shores amid such a blare of trumpets or was heralded, puffed and exaggerated like the English beauty. Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, stimulated perhaps by the crumbs from the manager's table, have joined in the acclaim; but one sees the inevitable result. Curiosity has been satiated; the actress turns out to be little more than an amateur; the best society does not take her to its arms, and if she remained in New York much longer the probability is that she would play to "a beggarly account of empty boxes." The Yankee public is not altogether a fool. While recognizing merit, it will not be humbugged by a photograph. Financially, therefore, the speculation of Mr. Abbey may be regarded as one that he is not likely to repeat with the same person as his bright particular star.

On the other hand, in Christine Nilsson, who is also under his enterprising management, one recognizes the potency of the real magnet that is attracting to her presence wherever she appears the best of our people, the cream of our society, its wealth, culture and refinement—the thousands who with an honest interest take the great *diva* to their hearts and bow with admiration at the shrine which she illumines with her genius. Wherever Nilsson has thus far appeared the record that comes to us from the press is one of unbought tribute. It tells us of the spontaneity of real enthusiasm, of the triumphs of a great artiste, of the affectionate and unselfish attachment that exists, and never has been forgotten, between a peerless singer who has come from the people and the people themselves. No need of the essence of royalty there; no need of the glamour of artificial light; no need of anything but the simple announcement of the fact that Christine Nilsson is to "sing the old songs again"—that is enough.

TELEGRAPHIC NEWS.

Flashd to Us from Everywhere.

Large Sale of Seats.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE MIRROR.]

PETERSBURG, Va., Nov. 28.—The Willbur Opera company rendered The Mascotte last night to a very large and enthusiastic audience. The sale of seats for Esmeralda indicates the largest house of the season Thanksgiving night.

The Girl That I Love.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE MIRROR.]

NEWPORT, R. I., Nov. 28.—Elliott Barnes' latest success, The Girl That I Love, was given at Bull's Opera House last night. W. H. Fitzgerald and Daisy Ramsden made hits.

Every Seat Sold.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE MIRROR.]

RICHMOND, Va., Nov. 28.—Every seat is sold for Esmeralda to-night—something very unusual here.

Keene in Georgia.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE MIRROR.]

ATHENS, Ga., Nov. 28.—Three hundred and ninety-two seats were sold in two hours for Keene's appearance in Macbeth to-night.

An Interruption to Nip and Tuck.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE MIRROR.]

UTICA, N. Y., Nov. 28.—Owing to the continued illness of little Carrie Webber, her father, Harry Webber, has been compelled to cancel a week's dates. The child plays an important part in Nip and Tuck. The company will remain in Buffalo week of Dec. 4, rehearsing Flint and Steel. They play in that city Nov. 29-30.

Romany Rye in the West.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE MIRROR.]

CHICAGO, Nov. 28.—Romany Rye was produced at Haverly's last night. The full house displayed little enthusiasm. The Thatcher-Primrose Minstrels drew a good house at the Grand. Den Thompson drew fairly at the opening of his second week. The Danites is on at Hooley's, and drew a medium house last night.

A Flattering Prospect for Rhea.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE MIRROR.]

DETROIT, Nov. 28.—Geistinger had a large house at the Detroit last night. Edouin ditto at Whitney's. There was not even standing room at the Park, where the Rentz-Santley company will make things lively for a week. Advance sale for the Rhea engagement is very great.

Ovation to a Manager.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE MIRROR.]

ST. PAUL, Nov. 28.—The Boston Ideals gave a sacred concert for the benefit of Manager Charles Hains, at the Opera House, on Sunday night. It was a grand affair—a perfect ovation. The receipts were the largest ever taken in St. Paul.

Leavitt's Giganteans.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE MIRROR.]

ALLENTOWN, Pa., Nov. 28.—Leavitt's Giganteans made a great hit last night with their burlesque Patience. The house was large.

The Damrosch Concert Tour.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE MIRROR.]

TOLEDO, O., Nov. 28.—The Damrosch concert drew a very large audience to Music Hall—the *Nit* of the city. Rhea had a grand house last night, and every seat is sold for to-night. The star's hold upon our public is secure.

Only an "Amachure."

We were in Hobart Town, Tasmania. We were an opera company, and had sung at the theatre of that beautiful little town for two weeks with tolerable success; that is, we did not lose much more than a couple of hundred pounds in the fortnight's engagement during which we played a new opera every night, three times a week in Italian and three times in English. We were individually great pets with the Tasmanian public, principally consisting of ex-convicts, or "government men," as they are called out there, and we used to meet of a night, after the opera was over, most of the choice spirits of the town, at a tavern called the "White Hart," kept by a little man by the name of Johnny McGrath, who had been transported from London, some thirty years before, for picking pockets; but who bore an unblemished character in Hobart Town as a worthy man and a good citizen whose honesty was beyond reproach.

Johnny, however, was not averse to displaying his dexterity to a few chosen friends of an evening, when they were seated before the ample fire of logs, on old-fashioned English settles. One evening we were all assembled when the talk drifted toward the old country, as England is always called in the colonies, and sundry stories of adventure, more or less creditable to the narrators, were told. After some very stiff yarns had been spun and equally stiff horns of grog had been emptied, one of the party began to chaff Johnny about his former exploits. The artist-spirit rose in Johnny, the sacred fire burned in his soul, and he offered to bet drinks round that he would abstract from the person of any one in the

company any number of articles stowed away in pocket, purse or on person.

The wager was taken up, and a big, stout man, Jim Kitts by name, the second-bass of our company, was adorned with a watch in each pocket, a breast-pin, two snuff-boxes, several coins, half a dozen pocket-handkerchiefs, and other trifles too numerous to mention. The investiture being complete, we returned to our muttons, and drank, smoked and joked as before. Half an hour or thereabouts had passed, and we grew impatient for the fun to begin.

"Hullo, Johnny," said one, "when does the 'fakement' commence?"

"What fakement?" asked Johnny.

"Why, the priggish fakement."

Johnny stepped out into the centre like a showman, and said with the true professional smirk, "Will the gentleman see what he has got upon his person?" Kitts put his hand in his waistcoat pocket—no watch was there. He tried his cravat—the pin was gone! His breeches pockets yielded no snuff-boxes, the coins had vanished, and the pocket handkerchiefs were absent. Tableau I.

"Molly!" cried Johnny to his wife, who was at the outer bar, "Molly, bring in the till." Molly obeyed, and in that depository were found all the articles. Tableau II.

"Gentlemen," said Johnny, "believe me, I don't do this professionally. At present I am only an amachure!"

Lillian Russell's Illness.



Tuesday afternoon we received the following communication from Lillian Russell's mother:

New York, Nov. 28.

EDITOR NEW YORK MIRROR:

The accepted rules of etiquette among theatrical people demand that when an important member of a company be seriously ill, it be officially announced by the manager, that justice be done both the public and the non-appearing professional.

Lillian Russell, the Aline in *The Sorcerer* at the Bijou Opera House, has been dangerously ill two weeks, and yet no announcement has been made through the press. This fact has created some unkind criticism and much unpleasant curiosity. It is not unusual for singers to be troubled with bronchial affection, and Miss Russell is subject to trouble of this kind in damp, unwholesome weather. She has never shirked her duty, but on the contrary appeared in her rôle even when she could not do justice to herself in singing. After her first attack she returned to her work much too soon, which was the occasion of her present illness. I am happy to state she is mending, and we hope will soon be able to assume her duties.

CYNTHIA LEONARD.

To learn of the exact condition of the prima donna a reporter called upon Dr. T. S. Robertson, who is attending her, last evening.

"Miss Russell," he said, "is quite ill; there can be no two opinions as to that. She is suffering from a low form of intermittent fever with typhoid symptoms. She has been treated by other physicians previously; but I have nothing to say about their treatment. When I was called in on Monday I found her with a high pulse and high temperature, and suffering greatly from general debility. She was unable to leave her bed; in fact, scarcely able to raise her head. Her previous illness was caused by acute tonsillitis, which prevented her from singing. This is still quite bad. I cannot give the exact time when she will again be able to appear upon the stage; but even with a rapid recovery it will be two or three weeks at least before she can sing again. She has always had difficulty with her throat, and it might have been likely that her previous illness was caused by constant rehearsals; but her present illness is in no sense due to any overwork. She worries a great deal about herself and about the report that there has been trouble between herself and Mr. McCaull. She assured me that there was not the slightest trouble between herself and her manager."

J. Z. Little has been advertising his *Against the World*, as *The World*, in the West. While in Louisville lately, Manager Dickson, of Brooks and Dickson, obtained a temporary injunction to prevent Little from using *The World* as the title of his play, and finally got out an order to have Little remove his advertisements from the papers, and to cover his bills. Mr. Little failed to obey this order and was arrested for contempt of court. He then promised to sin no more and was released. Mr. Dickson obtained a permanent injunction on Monday last, and Mr. Little will have to cease advertising *The World* hereafter, willy-nilly.

—The Carrie Stanley combination is still continuing its depredations on copyrighted plays. Hazel Kirke, *Divorce* and *Led Astray* is repertoire.